UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/50/11 and Add.1, A/50/254-E/1995/501, A/50/345, A/50/425-E/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518)

(b) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued) (A/50/39, A/50/421, A/50/340 and Add.1)

1. Mr. MPHATHI (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the 12 member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 48/173 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community, the SADC region had experienced a number of positive developments notably, the move towards multi-party democracy with the invaluable assistance of the international community and the expansion of the Community with the admission of South Africa and Mauritius.

2. At the same time, the region was facing daunting new challenges. Indeed, as a result of the expansion of the Community, there was a pressing need to reconstruct infrastructure throughout the region while addressing urgent social problems and putting the region's economies on a sustainable growth path. Noting that the Community had demonstrated prudence in the management of financial and other resources, he appealed to the international community to continue to assist SADC in its endeavours by providing new and additional resources.

3. The SADC countries had, in addition to many areas of common interest (such as the energy, agricultural and natural resources and environment sectors), established a mechanism to deal with defence, security and conflict resolution in the region. The Community was presently engaged in discussions with other regional organizations in the context of South-South cooperation. In that regard, he welcomed the establishment of the African-Latin American Institute with headquarters in Namibia and Uruguay.

4. Mr. PAWAR (India) said that economic and technical cooperation among developing countries was a valuable mechanism for promoting growth and accelerated development particularly at a time when protectionist pressures were intensifying in the developed countries. Such cooperation strengthened the collective self-reliance of developing countries and facilitated the reorientation and growth of the world economy. The countries involved in South-South cooperation should focus on modest practical projects in the fields of trade, investment and transfer of technology and should avoid waste and duplication and reduce costs through harmonization.

5. The involvement of the private sector should be more actively encouraged. Given the inadequacy of information about the situation and economic prospects in other developing countries, access to relevant information databases should be fostered. South-South cooperation should be expanded by increa ing product and country coverage, and regional cooperation and integration arrangements should be promoted in order to enhance competitiveness and facilitate benefits from economies of scale. The Preferential Trade Arrangement of the South Asian

Association for Regional Cooperation was an example of such cooperation. Measures should also be taken to encourage private investment flows among developing countries. Regional centres of excellence should be established and networking among them promoted in order to build human resources. The developed countries should assist by providing financial support through triangular economic and technical assistance programmes. The capacity of the United Nations system to contribute further to the expansion of South-South cooperation should be strengthened.

6. Despite constraints on its resources, his country actively cooperated with other developing countries, for example, by providing training, educational, consultancy and technical and economic services and through innovative cooperation programmes. In conclusion, he said that only by ensuring a better quality of life for all peoples could peace and security be assured. Accordingly, increased bilateral and multilateral resources should be allocated to support economic and technical cooperation among developing countries.

7. Mr. Ha Young MOON (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation attached great importance to economic and technical cooperation among developing countries. The potential for South-South cooperation had increased signifi-antly during the 1990s with increasing globalization and interdependence among nations and new opportunities had been created by the expanding world market economy.

8. His country considered human resources development a prerequisite for the economic and social development of developing countries and it hosted training programmes for participants from many developing countries. Commensurate with its capacity, his country was committed to assisting other countries; it would increase its official development assistance and hoped to provide technical training to over 80,000 people by the year 2010.

9. Increased participation of the private sector and selected non-governmental organizations in the planning and implementation of South-South cooperation would facilitate the integration of technical and economic cooperation among developing countries, thereby maximizing the impact of South-South cooperation projects. Many private sector companies in his country provided facilities for the implementation of Government-sponsored training courses for such cooperation.

10. Efforts to promote South-South cooperation should be intensified, in particular through the United Nations Development Programmes Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and other appropriate channels. In conclusion, the developed countries, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), regional development banks and other multilateral financial institutions should increase their contributions within the framework of triangular funding arrangements in order significantly to accelerate South-South cooperation activities.

11. Mr. BELHIMEUR (Algeria) after reviewing the history of the involvement of the United Nations in promoting South-South cooperation, underscored the importance of General Assembly resolution 49/96, and said that at its current

session the General Assembly should endorse the recommendations of the recent UNDP/UNCTAD jointly supported Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on South-South Cooperation. Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries should be viewed not as an alternative but rather, as complementary to North-South cooperation.

12. Regional and subregional cooperation - one example of which had been the establishment of the African Economic Community in 1991 - had made a significant contribution to South-South cooperation. Although it was true that such cooperation had been helpful in combating poverty and that the economies of some developing countries had prospered, the fact remained that official development assistance was declining; there was a tendency to expect the developing countries to adopt the same economic reforms as their developed partners, without regard to their respective capacities to adjust to the ups and downs of an increasingly complex world economy. To succeed, South-South cooperation required the assistance of the wealthy countries, which had as much to gain from the undertaking. The process of economic integration among the developing countries must be strengthened. The UNCTAD Standing Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries and the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries of UNDP had identified a wide range of areas for enhanced cooperation to achieve that goal. It was also necessary to restructure international economic relations by enabling the developing countries to participate more fully in multilateral decision-making bodies, improving export prices for their commodities and increasing investment flows to those countries. Donor nations should increase their involvement through triangular funding arrangements.

13. Various components of the United Nations system had made a significant contribution to South-South cooperation. The Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries should receive greater logistical and material support in order to enable it more effectively to promote such cooperation. Member States should give due consideration to the establishment of a special fund for South-South cooperation. His delegation also favoured the convening of a United Nations conference on the topic.

14. Mr. ANSAY (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)) said that his organization was well equipped for fostering technical cooperation among developing countries. Its members were all developing countries; the mandates of its legislative bodies called for the promotion of economic, social and cultural cooperation among Member States; and its subsidiary organs, agencies, affiliated institutions and international universities were geared towards the sharing of capacities and strengthening of cooperation in different spheres of socio-economic activity.

15. Referring to the report of the High-level Committee on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries on the work of its ninth session (A/50/39), he said that the international community's support strategy must always be tailored to the specific needs of Member States as identified by them, even when in certain instances such needs might fall in other areas of development, such as public service reform or the peaceful use of atomic energy. In that connection, OIC stood ready to collaborate with the United Nations in providing such expertise, consultancies and research and training opportunities.

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to institutions of member States as its specialized institutions might be able to mobilize. He looked forward to a revival of his organization's relationship with the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries. He would support proposals that might advance that process, resource and other constraints notwithstanding.

16. Other areas that had the potential for cooperation between OIC and the United Nations organizations in the promotion of ECDC/TCDC, would be collaboration in establishing an equivalent of the UNDP Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) Programme in OIC member countries and promoting the trade information network of the Chambers of Commerce and Industries of the Group of 77 countries and reinforcing and expanding the TCDC Information Referral System's network.

17. Mr. LAING (Belize) said that increasing globalization called for the intensification of economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) and technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC). Only thus could developing countries cope with the rapid changes in technology and products. The proliferation of often converging and overlapping subregional and regional cooperation arrangements was merely a reflection of the dynamism which drove globalization. In that regard, there was a need to expand the scope of formal cooperation by encouraging ECDC and TCDC between regions.

18. Noting that developing countries generally had little or no impact on multilateral trade, he called for a serious study of the position of small countries. To that end, assistance was urgently required to improve trade financing mechanisms, develop service sectors, develop laws on international trade and develop regional mechanisms for trade adjudication.

19. The issue of trade financing could be addressed in part if the newly industrialized and newly industrializing countries could be persuaded to tolerate a greater degree of risk, not only in the area of trade but also in that of investments.

20. In order to usher in a climate that was propitious to South-South cooperation, ECDC/TCDC should be enhanced by extending it to new areas such as women in the economy - as opposed to women in development - by reorienting transportation, especially air and maritime transportation, in a South-South direction and improving South-South telecommunications capabilities in order to reverse the anti-democratic trends in the ownership of that vital medium. ECDC/TCDC institutions must also support vast increases in educational, scientific and technological development in the South. In that connection he called for the strengthening of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries as well as for the strengthening of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.